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- (54) **HELICOPTER CREW-SERVED WEAPON MOUNTING APPARATUS**
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B64D 7/06 (2006.01)
F41A 27/06 (2006.01)
F41A 9/29 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC . **B64D 7/06** (2013.01); **F41A 9/29** (2013.01);
F41A 27/06 (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

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See application file for complete search history.

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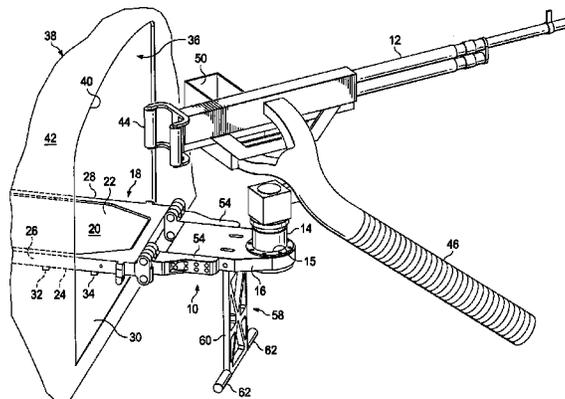
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Armament apparatus is provided for an aircraft having an interior area. The armament apparatus includes a horizontally disposed, generally plank-shaped elongated support beam member having top and bottom sides, a longitudinally intermediate section extending transversely through the interior area, and an outer end portion extending outwardly beyond an exterior side of the aircraft and having top and bottom sides and laterally opposite side edges. The outer support beam end portion, along at least a substantial portion of its length is laterally narrower than the intermediate section of the support beam member. This permits a crew member to sit on the support beam member, with his legs outside the aircraft and downwardly straddling the outer support beam end portion, and operate a crew-served weapon on the top side of the outer end portion of support beam member.

8 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



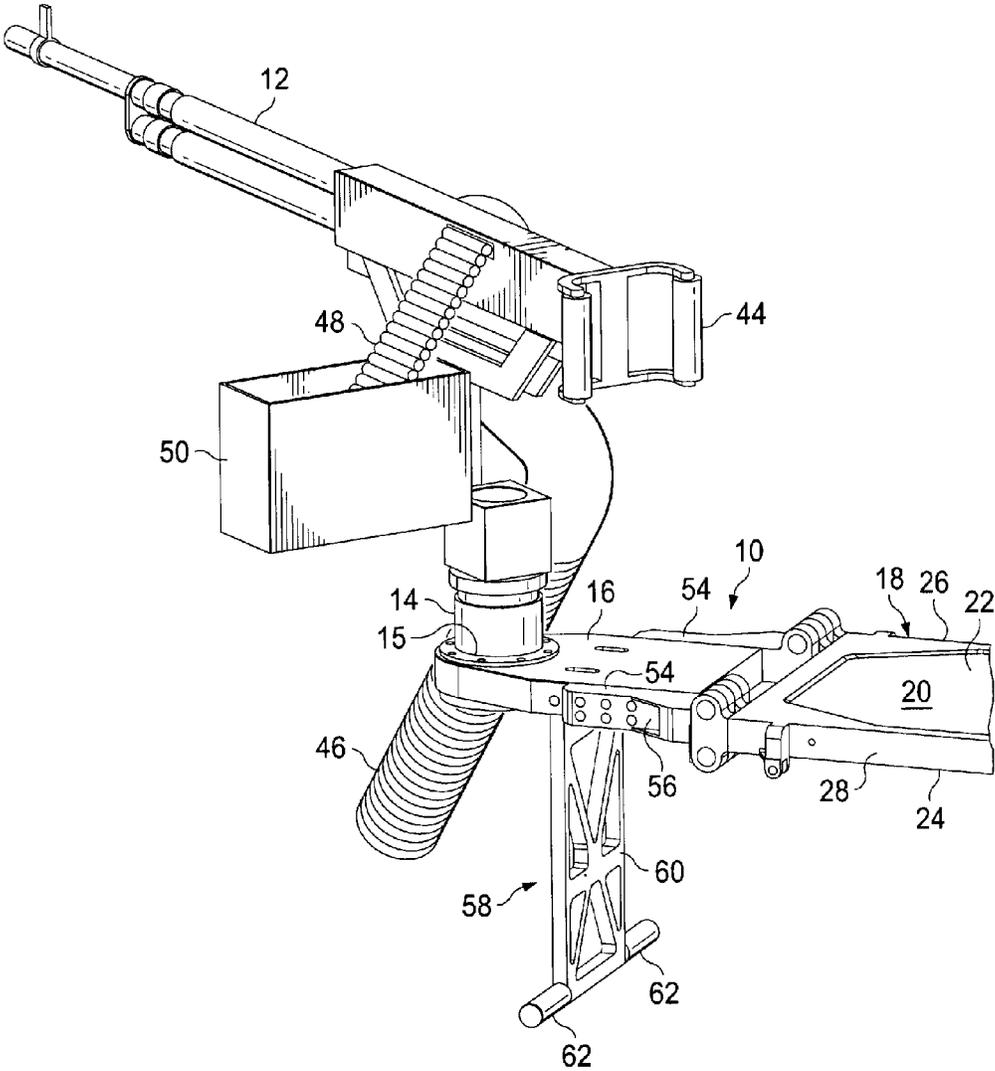


Fig. 2

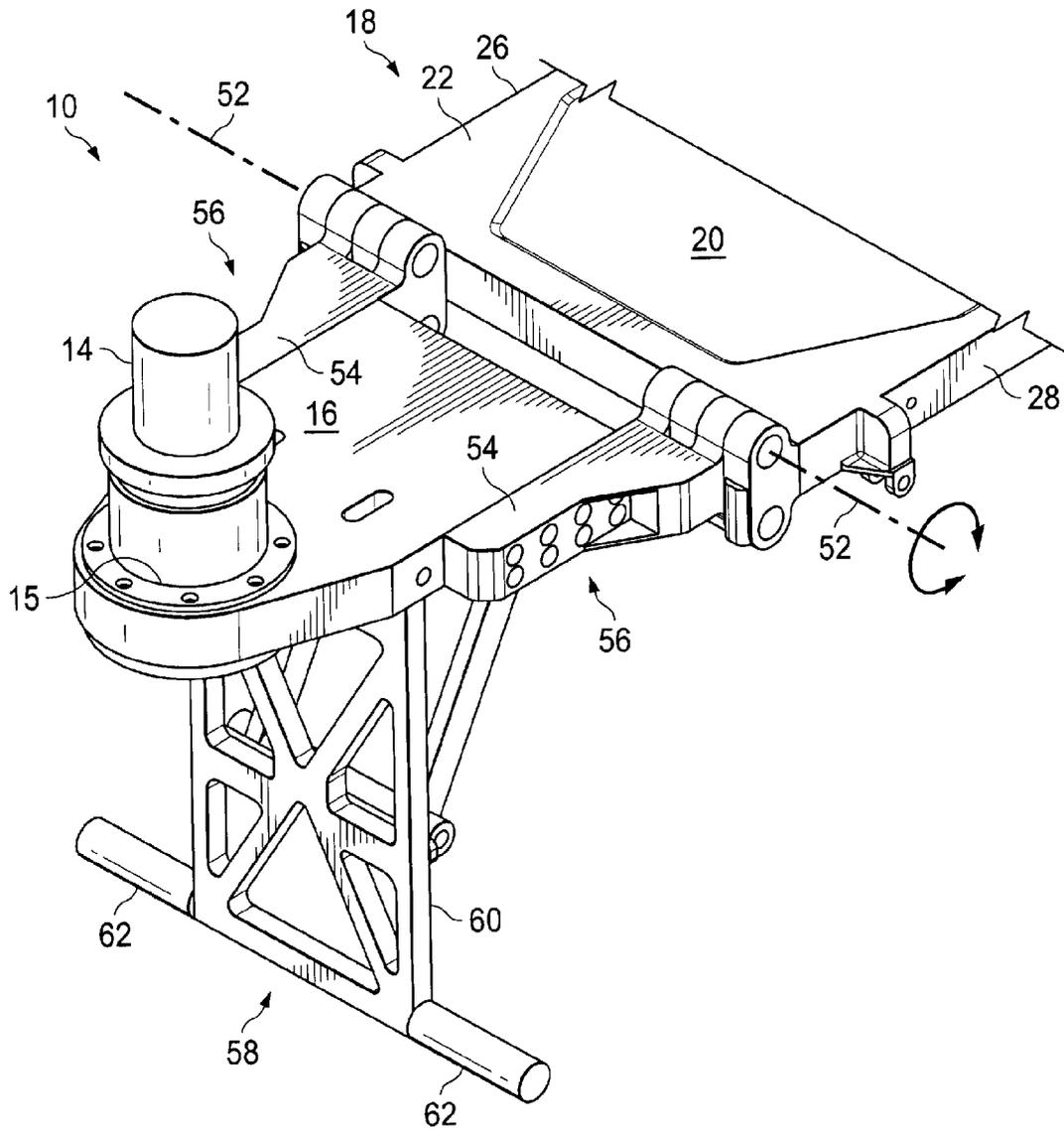


Fig. 3

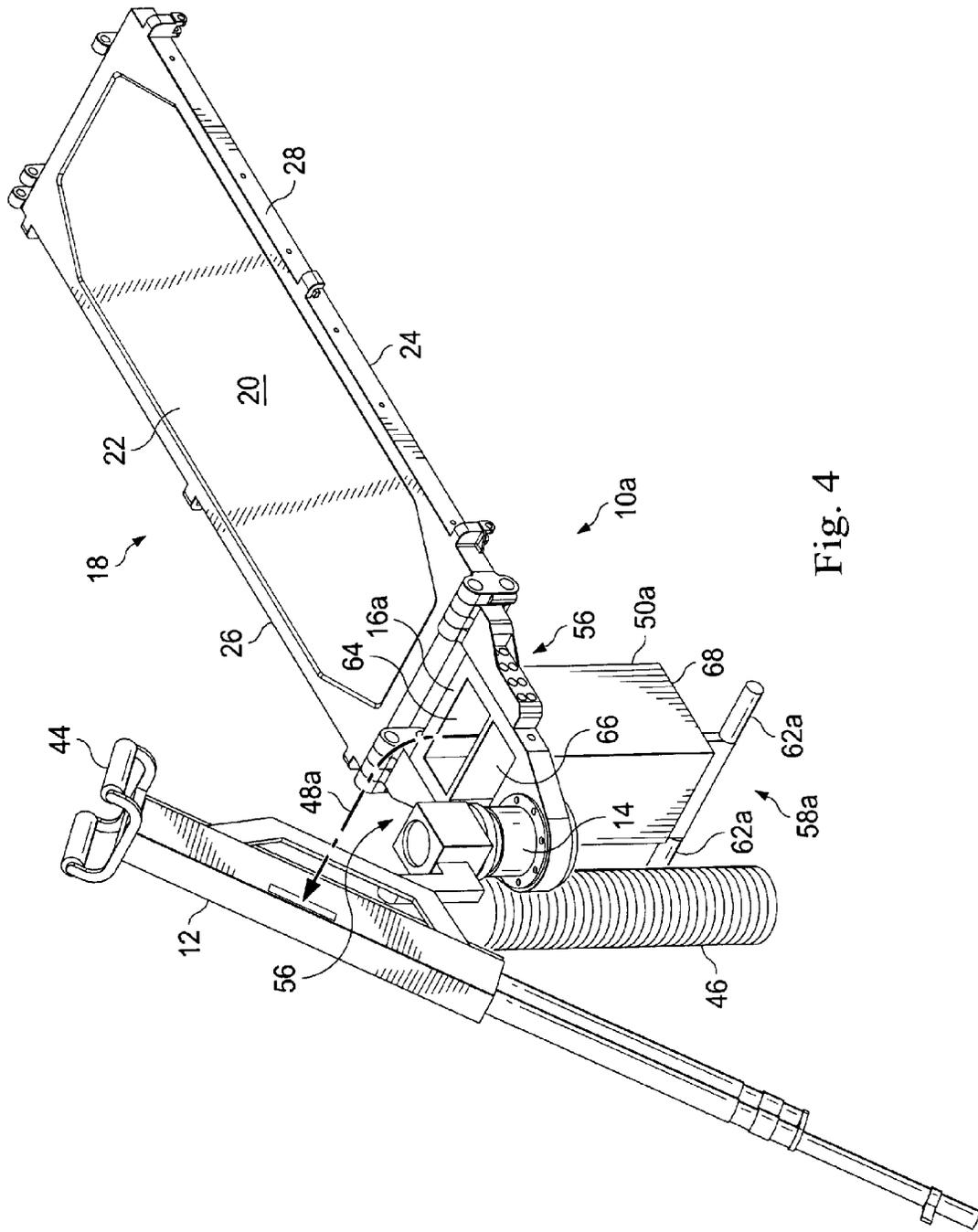


Fig. 4

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HELICOPTER CREW-SERVED WEAPON MOUNTING APPARATUS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

The present application claims the benefit of the filing date of provisional U.S. patent application No. 61/856,984 filed Jul. 22, 2013. The entire disclosure of the provisional application is hereby incorporated herein by this reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to support beam-based mounting apparatus for a crew-served weapon, representatively a machine gun. More specifically, the present invention provides aircraft weapon mounting apparatus that incorporates various improvements over the helicopter crew-served weapon mounting apparatus illustrated and described in U.S. Pat. No. 7,765,912 to Serkland.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an inboard-directed perspective view of crew-served weapon mounting apparatus embodying principles of the present invention, the apparatus being mounted on a helicopter and operatively supporting a machine gun;

FIG. 2 is an outboard-directed perspective view of the crew-served weapon mounting apparatus of FIG. 1 removed from the helicopter;

FIG. 3 is an enlarged scale inboard-directed perspective view of the FIG. 1 crew-served weapon mounting apparatus with the machine gun removed therefrom; and

FIG. 4 is an enlarged scale inboard-directed perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the FIG. 1 crew-served weapon mounting apparatus with the machine gun removed therefrom.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

With reference to the accompanying FIGS. 1-3, this invention provides aircraft weapon mounting apparatus 10 that incorporates various improvements over the helicopter crew-served weapon mounting apparatus illustrated and described in U.S. Pat. No. 7,765,912 to Serkland, the subject matter of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. In the present invention, a crew-served weapon, representatively a machine gun 12, is pivotally and rotationally mounted via a pintle structure 14 on an outer end portion 16 of an elongated weaponry support beam 18 which may be similar in construction to the plank structure illustrated and described, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,024,138 to Sanderson et al or U.S. Pat. No. 6,241,185 to Sanderson. The pintle structure 14 is preferably received in an opening 15 in the outboard end of the outer beam end portion 16 and, in a conventional manner, may be fitted with suitable adapter structures to permit other types of weaponry (for example, a different caliber machine gun) to be mounted on the pintle structure 14.

As illustrated in FIG. 1, the support beam 18 has a longitudinally intermediate section 20, and further has top and bottom sides 22 and 24 and opposite, laterally spaced apart side edges 26 and 28. The longitudinally intermediate beam portion 20 is suitably anchored, bottom side down as schematically shown at 32 and 34, to the floor 30 of a cabin or other interior area 36 of an aircraft, such as the illustrated helicopter 38, with the longitudinally intermediate beam

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portion 20 extending transversely through the cabin area 36 and outer beam end portion 16 projecting outwardly through an opening 40 in an exterior cabin wall 42. This places the machine gun 12 outboard of the wall 42. As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, the machine gun 12 has an operator firing handle portion 44 and a spent casing discharge chute 46, and is supplied with belted ammunition 48 from an ammunition box 50 suitably supported on the machine gun 12. Preferably, the outer beam end portion 16 is removably and hingedly connected to the outer end of the longitudinally intermediate beam portion 20 for pivotal movement relative thereto about a horizontal axis 52 toward and away from the longitudinally intermediate beam portion 20 to permit the outer beam end portion 16 to be swung into the cabin area 36 onto the top of the longitudinally intermediate beam portion (in a manner similar to that shown in the aforementioned U.S. Pat. No. 6,241,185 to Sanderson).

As can be seen in FIGS. 1-3, in carrying out principles of the present invention in accordance with a representative embodiment thereof, the outer beam end portion 16 is provided with a unique configuration that substantially facilitates the use of the crew-served machine gun 12 (or another type of crew-served weapon mounted on the outer beam end portion 16). For example, along at least a substantial portion of its length, the outer beam end portion 16 is laterally narrower (i.e. between its opposite side edges) than the longitudinally intermediate beam portion 20. This facilitates the seating of a crew member (not shown) on an outer end portion of the support beam 18 with his legs disposed outwardly of the helicopter and downwardly straddling the outer beam end portion 16 while the crew member operatively grasps the machine gun firing handle portion 44.

The comfort and stability of this seated position of the crew member operating the machine gun 12 is illustratively enhanced by the securement to the outer side edges of the outer beam end portion, adjacent its juncture with the longitudinally intermediate beam portion 20, of generally L-shaped brackets 54 that form recesses 56 which receive portions of the gun operator's legs when they are downwardly straddling the outer beam end portion 16. As will be readily appreciated by those of skill in this particular art, the recesses 56 could be provided in a variety of other manners such as, for example, suitably forming them integrally with the outer beam end portion 16. Further stabilizing this seated weapon operator position is the provision of a specially designed foot rest structure 56 that depends from the underside of the outer beam end portion 16 between the pintle structure 14 and the inboard end of the outer beam end portion 16. The foot rest structure 58 has a vertically elongated body portion 60 from the bottom end of which opposed foot pegs 62 transversely project. With the gun operator's legs straddling the outer beam end portion and received in the bracket recesses 56, the operator simply braces his feet on the pegs 62.

The specially configured outer beam end portion 16 also facilitates a different gun operator position on the beam 18. Specifically, the operator may simply kneel down on the beam 20 facing the machine gun 12 in a position in which the operator may look directly downwardly past the opposite sides of the laterally narrowed outer beam end portion 16 to better survey downwardly disposed firing targets closer to the helicopter 38 or other type of aircraft on which the weapon mounting apparatus 10 is carried.

Perspectively illustrated in FIG. 4 is an alternate embodiment 10a of the previously described aircraft weapon mounting apparatus 10. The aircraft weapon mounting apparatus 10a is identical to the previously described aircraft

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weapon mounting apparatus 10 (FIGS. 1-3) with the excep-
 tion that in place of the gun-mounted ammunition box 50
 illustratively utilized in the apparatus 10 vertically elongated
 rectangular ammunition box 50a which depends from a
 modified outer beam end portion 16a that has a rectangular
 opening 64 extending vertically therethrough inboard of the
 pintle structure 14 and generally between the recesses 56.
 The ammunition box 50a has an open top end 66 which
 underlies and is aligned with the opening 64, and a closed
 bottom end portion 68 from which opposite foot pegs 62a
 transversely extend.

Belted ammunition 48a is operatively fed to the machine
 gun 12 as schematically depicted by the dashed line in FIG.
 4. The indicated outer plank end portion positioning of the
 ammunition box 50a conveniently permits access by the
 sitting gun operator to the ammunition box 50a due to the
 positioning of its upper feed end 66 between his legs. As can
 be seen, the ammunition box 50a and the foot pegs 62a
 shown in FIG. 4 form a foot rest structure 58a that replaces
 the previously described foot rest structure 58 shown in
 FIGS. 1-3, with the ammunition box 50a defining a support
 body portion of the foot rest structure 58a.

The foregoing detailed description is to be clearly under-
 stood as being given by way of illustration and example
 only, the spirit and scope of the present invention being
 limited solely by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. For use on an aircraft having an interior area with an
 exterior side wall opening, armament apparatus comprising:
 an elongated, generally plank-shaped support beam mem-
 ber having top and bottom sides extending between
 opposite side edges, an outer end portion, and a longi-
 tudinally intermediate section extending inwardly
 from said outer end portion, said longitudinally inter-
 mediate section being sized and configured to be longi-
 tudinally extendable, bottom side down, transversely
 through the interior area and be secured within the
 interior area with said outer end portion extending
 outwardly through the exterior side wall opening, said
 outer end portion having, at least along a majority of its
 length, an edge-to-edge width less than that of said
 longitudinally intermediate section; and

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a weapon mounting structure, mounted on a top side
 portion of said outer end portion for operatively sup-
 porting a crew-served weapon,
 wherein the outer end portion is configured such that a
 crew member may sit on said support beam member,
 with the crew member's legs outside of the aircraft and
 downwardly straddling said outer end portion, and
 operate a crew-served weapon supported by said
 weapon mounting structure; and
 a foot rest structure depending from a bottom side of the
 outer end portion.
 2. The armament apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
 said outer end portion has opposite recesses formed in the
 opposite side edges thereof for receiving portions of the
 crew member's legs.
 3. The armament apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
 the aircraft is a helicopter.
 4. The armament apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
 said weapon mounting structure is operative to support a
 machine gun.
 5. The armament apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
 opposite side edges of said outer end portion have
 recesses therein, and
 said foot rest structure is disposed between an outer end
 of said outer end portion and said opposite side edge
 recesses.
 6. The armament apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
 said foot rest structure includes a vertically extending
 support body having a lower end portion from which a
 pair of opposite foot pegs transversely extend.
 7. The armament apparatus of claim 1 wherein:
 said outer end portion is secured to said longitudinally
 intermediate section for pivotal movement about a
 horizontal axis toward and away from said longitudi-
 nally intermediate section.
 8. The armament apparatus of claim 4 further comprising
 an ammunition box operatively carried on said outer end
 portion for use with a machine gun supported by said
 weapon mounting structure.

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